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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ATHENS 000033

SIPDIS

DEPT PASS TO EUR/ERA:ELIZABETH KONICK
AMEMBASSY ANKARA PASS TO AMCONSUL ADANA
AMEMBASSY ASTANA PASS TO AMCONSUL ALMATY
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PASS TO AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PASS TO AMCONSUL LEIPZIG
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PASS TO AMEMBASSY PODGORICA
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI PASS TO AMCONSUL ST PETERSBURG
AMEMBASSY ATHENS PASS TO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL YEKATERINBURG

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SUBJECT: Greek Views on January 2010 FAC

REF: ELIZABETH KONICK EMAIL 01/16/2010

CLASSIFIED BY: George Frowick, Political Counselor; REASON: 1.4(B),
(D)

11. (C) On January 21, Poloff discussed ref points on U.S. positions on the January 25 FAC (Foreign Affairs Council) with Alexandros Ioannidis, European Correspondent in the MFA All Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) Division. Ioannidis said the FAC's agenda would focus on Iran, Bosnia, Somalia, Afghanistan and the London conference, Yemen, and a briefing by French FM Kouchner on his recent trip to Central Africa. Haiti would be discussed in the GAC (General Affairs Council), and Serbia would not be discussed.

12. (C) IRAN: Ioannidis said Iran would be discussed by the FMs at lunch. The Greek position against further sanctions had not changed, but Greece would "never break the EU consensus on this issue." Ioannidis said it was almost certain the EU would move towards backing a UNSCR, but that "some countries" wanted sanctions against Iran even outside of a UN resolution. Greece hoped this option would not come to pass--but, again, would not break EU consensus if it came to this. Ioannidis provided a priority list of Greece's interests in Iran: 1) Greek oil imports, a third of which came from Iran; 2) shipping business with Iran; and 3) more general business and trade. Because of this, Greece would push to remove any energy-related sanctions from a final package.

13. (C) Ioannidis also noted that human rights had become an increasingly important factor for Greek policy towards Iran, perhaps close to equal in importance to the nuclear issue. Greece believed that sanctions on the nuclear issue might cause the Iranians to backtrack on human rights, and even nudge the Iranians to stir up "regional instability" in Lebanon or with Hamas. He stated that EU ambassadors in Tehran had demarched Iranian FM Motaki on human rights on January 19, and that the Greek MFA had demarched the Iranian ambassador in Athens on human rights issues on January 20.

14. (C) BOSNIA: According to Ioannidis, Bosnia would also be discussed by FMs at lunch. On EUFOR Althea, Ioannidis said many EU members wanted to remove their troops by October 2010, at the end of the current mandate--but some members (such as Spain) possibly even before then. He said the FMs would discuss "non-executive capacity building" as a focus for EUFOR. When asked if this meant

the EU would likely draw down its current force structure and military mandate, Ioannidis nodded. Ioannidis also noted that EU members disagreed on the Butmir process; some wanted to abandon it completely, while others wanted to give it more time. According to Ioannidis, the Spanish EU presidency was considering a plan, "in the spirit of Butmir," to bring together the major Bosnia actors for a conference in Spain, to give them one last push to reach an agreement. If no deal were possible, the Spaniards were willing to wait for October 2010 elections for a new set of interlocutors to work with. The Greek position was that the situation on the ground had improved over the years and that the Dayton framework needed to change. Greek priorities included orienting Bosnia towards the EU, advancing visa liberalization, and countering Russian influence in the region.

15. (C) SOMALIA: Most EU members are in favor of a robust training mission for Somalia, but objections exist from "three or four countries" on the details, according to Ioannidis. Greece was "ready to contribute immediately" to a training mission and Ioannidis said the Greeks were one of the strongest EU proponents for action, given the continued piracy risks to Greek shipping. He noted that High Representative Ashton was considering convening a conference on Somalia.

16. (C) AFGHANISTAN: Ioannidis said that the main discussion on Afghanistan would center on the lead-up to the London Conference.

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The Greeks assumed that HR Ashton would lead a unified EU team. Particular Greek concerns that would be submitted for EU discussion included: 1) Strengthening the non-military component of EU assistance in Afghanistan; Greece felt that UNAMA should have a stronger role and that the focus on ISAF and military action was too strong; and 2) linkages between the Afghanistan situation and increased illegal migration should be discussed. Ioannidis said that Greece, Spain, Italy, and several other nations would press for a discussion on the effects of illegal migration from Afghanistan.

17. (C) UKRAINE, HAITI, CENTRAL AFRICA: While Ukraine would not be discussed at the FAC, according to Ioannidis, Greece agreed that the recent elections were positive. However, there was little enthusiasm for EU enlargement to include Ukraine at this juncture. On Haiti, Ioannidis said there would be a discussion on better EU coordination of aid as well as how to respond to the UN request for assistance. Also, Ioannidis said that French FM Kouchner had requested time to brief EU members on his recent trip to Central Africa (NFI).
Speckhard